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Calypso and Krishna's Flute: The Indo-Caribbean Woman's Moving Body

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Abstract

...She did not wear saris no more.
Calypso she liked and could wine down
with the best of them. She became deaf
to the melody of Krishna's flute.
she chose Manny, not Lord Rama in her
Hindu epic gone wrong. At her wedding
she never once uttered Ganesh's name,
loosened the grasp of Vishnu's
four hands from around her waist.
...She named Granddaddy
Leon, a good European name, like all the other
rootless Negroes.

—Christian Campbell, "Curry Powder"

Caribbean poet Christian Campbell's (2010) account of his Indian great-grandmother Nita's rejection of markers of her culture and religion for a life with his great-grandfather, a so-called "rootless negro", reminds us of the complex relations between communities of Indian and African origins in diasporic space, as well as of the Indian

woman's body being used for the maintenance of inter-community boundaries. Indeed, for every Nita who breached those boundaries, there were other Indian women who accepted them and their role as preservers and transmitters of "Indianness". Yet how intact, really, were those boundaries? Did the movements of calypso and the melody of Krishna's flute never mingle? How does Indo-Caribbean feminism deal with the issues of tradition, pleasure, enjoyment and transgression that this poem signals through "calypso" and "Krishna's flute"?